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About Hammurabi:

Hammurabi (Akkadian from Amorite ʿAmmurāpi, "the kinsman is a healer," from ʿAmmu, "paternal kinsman," and Rāpi, "healer"; (ca. 1728 – 1686 BC middle chronology) was the sixth king of Babylon. He became the first king of the Babylonian Empire, extending Babylon's control over Mesopotamia by winning a series of wars against neighboring kingdoms. Although his empire controlled all of Mesopotamia at the time of his death, his successors were unable to maintain his empire. Owing to his reputation in modern times as an ancient law-giver, Hammurabi's portrait is in many government buildings throughout the world.

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THE CODE OF HAMMURABI

Witchcraft and the ordeal by water

§ 1. If a man has accused another of laying a *nêrtu* (death spell?) upon him, but has not proved it, he shall be put to death.

Witchcraft and the ordeal by water

§ 2. If a man has accused another of laying a *kišpu* (spell) upon him, but has not proved it, the accused shall go to the sacred river, he shall plunge into the sacred river, and if the sacred river shall conquer him, he that accused him shall take possession of his house. If the sacred river shall show his innocence and he is saved, his accuser shall be put to death. He that plunged into the sacred river shall appropriate the house of him that accused him.

False witness in capital suit

§ 3. If a man has borne false witness in a trial, or has not established the statement that he has made, if that case be a capital trial, that man shall be put to death.

False witness in In civil case

§ 4. If he has borne false witness in a civil law case, he shall pay the damages in that suit.

Judgment once given not to be altered

§ 5. If a judge has given a verdict, rendered a decision, granted a written judgment, and afterward has altered his judgment, that judge shall be prosecuted for altering the judgment he gave and shall pay twelvefold the penalty laid down in that judgment. Further, he shall be publicly expelled from his judgment-seat and shall not return nor take his seat with the judges at a trial.

Burglary and acceptance of stolen goods

§ 6. If a man has stolen goods from a temple, or house, he shall be put to death; and he that has received the stolen property from him shall be put to death.

Dealings with irresponsible persons

§ 7. If a man has bought or received on deposit from a minor or a slave, either silver, gold, male or female slave, ox, ass, or sheep, or anything else, except by consent of elders, or power of attorney, he shall be put to death for theft.

Theft

§ 8. If a patrician has stolen ox, sheep, ass, pig, or ship, whether from a temple, or a house, he shall pay thirtyfold. If he be a plebeian, he shall return tenfold. If the thief cannot pay, he shall be put to death.

Procedure in case of the discovery of lost property

§ 9. If a man has lost property and some of it be detected in the possession of another, and the holder has said, “A man sold it to me, I bought it in the presence of witnesses”; and if the claimant has said, “I can bring witnesses who know it to be property lost by me”; then the alleged buyer on his part shall produce the man who sold it to him and the witnesses before whom he bought it; the claimant shall on his part produce the witnesses who know it to be his lost property. The judge shall examine their pleas. The witnesses to the sale and the witnesses who identify the lost property shall state on oath what they know. Such a seller is the thief and shall be put to death. The owner of the lost property shall recover his lost property. The buyer shall recoup himself from the seller’s estate.

Procedure in case of the discovery of lost property

§ 10. If the alleged buyer on his part has not produced the seller or the witnesses before whom the sale took place, but the owner of the lost property on his part has produced the witnesses who identify it as his, then the [pretended] buyer is the thief; he shall be put to death. The owner of the lost property shall take his lost property.

Procedure in case of the discovery of lost property

§ 11. If, on the other hand, the claimant of the lost property has not brought the witnesses that know his lost property, he has been guilty of slander, he has stirred up strife, he shall be put to death.

Procedure in case of the discovery of lost property

§ 12. If the seller has in the meantime died, the buyer shall take from his estate fivefold the value sued for.

Judgment by default

§ 13. If a man has not his witnesses at hand, the judge shall set him a fixed time not exceeding six months, and if within six months he has not produced his witnesses, the man has lied; he shall bear the penalty of the suit.

Kidnapping

§ 14. If a man has stolen a child, he shall be put to death.

Abduction of slave

§ 15. If a man has induced either a male or female slave from the house of a patrician, or plebeian, to leave the city, he shall be put to death.

Harboring a fugitive slave

§ 16. If a man has harbored in his house a male or female slave from a patrician's or plebeian's house, and has not caused the fugitive to leave on the demand of the officer over the slaves condemned to public forced labor, that householder shall be put to death.

The capture of a fugitive slave

§ 17. If a man has caught either a male or female runaway slave in the open field and has brought him back to his owner, the owner of the slave shall give him two shekels of silver.

The capture of a fugitive slave

§ 18. If such a slave will not name his owner, his captor shall bring him to the palace, where he shall be examined as to his past and returned to his owner.

The capture of a fugitive slave

§ 19. If the captor has secreted that slave in his house and afterward that slave has been caught in his possession, he shall be put to death.

The capture of a fugitive slave

§ 20. If the slave has fled from the hands of his captor, the latter shall swear to the owner of the slave and he shall be free from blame.

Burglary

§ 21. If a man has broken into a house he shall be killed before the breach and buried there.

Highway robbery

§ 22. If a man has committed highway robbery and has been caught, that man shall be put to death.

Highway robbery

§ 23. If the highwayman has not been caught, the man that has been robbed shall state on oath what he has lost and the city or district governor in whose territory or district the robbery took place shall restore to him what he has lost.

Highway robbery

§ 24. If a life [has been lost], the city or district governor shall pay one mina of silver to the deceased's relatives.

Theft at a fire

§ 25. If a fire has broken out in a man’s house and one who has come to put it out has coveted the property of the householder and appropriated any of it, that man shall be cast into the self-same fire.

Duties and privileges of an officer over the levy

§ 26. If a levy-master, or warrant-officer, who has been detailed on the king's service, has not gone, or has hired a substitute in his place, that levy-master, or warrant-officer, shall be put to death and the hired substitute shall take his office.

Duties and privileges of an officer over the levy

§ 27. If a levy-master, or warrant-officer, has been assigned to garrison duty, and in his absence his field and garden have been given to another who has carried on his duty, when the absentee has returned and regained his city, his field and garden shall be given back to him and he shall resume his duty.

Rights and duties of an official's son

§ 28. If a levy-master, or warrant-officer, has been assigned to garrison duty, and has a son able to carry on his official duty, the field and garden shall be given to him and he shall carry on his father’s duty.

Rights and duties of an official's son

§ 29. If the son be a child and is not able to carry on his father’s duty, one-third of the field and garden shall be given to his mother to educate him.

Penalty for neglect of an official's benefice

§ 30. If such an official has neglected the care of his field, garden, or house, and let them go to waste, and if another has taken his field, garden, or house, in his absence, and carried on the duty for three years, if the absentee has returned and would cultivate his field, garden, or house, it shall not be given him; he who has taken it and carried on the duty connected with it shall continue to do so.

Penalty for neglect of an official's benefice

§ 31. If for one year only he has let things go to waste and he has returned, his field, garden, and house shall be given him, and he himself shall carry on his duty.

An official's ransom, if captured

§ 32. If such an official has been assigned to the king’s service (and captured by the enemy) and has been ransomed by a merchant and helped to regain his city, if he has had means in his house to pay his ransom, he himself shall do so. If he has not had means of his own, he shall be ransomed by the temple treasury. If there has not been means in the temple treasury of his city, the state will ransom him. His field, garden, or house shall not be given for his ransom.

Duties of district governors

§ 33. If either a governor or a prefect has appropriated to his own use the corvée, or has accepted and sent on the king’s service a hired substitute in his place, that governor, or prefect, shall be put to death.

Governors not to oppress subordinates

§ 34. If either a governor, or a prefect, has appropriated the property of a levy-master, has hired him out, has robbed him by high-handedness at a trial, has taken the salary which the king gave to him, that governor, or prefect, shall be put to death.

The benefice of a levy-master, warrant-officer, or tributary inalienable

§ 35. If a man has bought from a levy-master the sheep, or oxen, which the king gave him, he shall lose his money.

The benefice of a levy-master, warrant-officer, or tributary inalienable

§ 36. The field, garden, or house, of a levy-master, warrant-officer, or tributary shall not be sold.

The benefice of a levy-master, warrant-officer, or tributary inalienable

§ 37. If a man has bought field, garden, or house, of a levy-master, a warrant-officer, or tributary, his title-deed shall be destroyed and he shall lose his money. He shall return the field, garden, or house to its owner.

Not to be bequeathed to an official's family

§ 38. A levy-master, warrant-officer, or tributary, shall not bequeath anything from the field, garden, or house of his benefice to his wife or daughter, nor shall he give it for his debt.

Not to be bequeathed to an official's family

§ 39. From the field, garden, or house which he has bought and acquired, he shall make bequests to his wife, or daughter, or shall assign for his debt.

The obligation resting upon a buyer of real estate

§ 40. A votary, merchant, or resident alien may sell his field, garden, or house, and the buyer shall discharge the public service connected with the field, garden, or house that he has bought.

A benefice not to be exchanged

§ 41. If a man has given property in exchange for the field, garden, or house, of a levy-master, warrant-officer, or tributary, such an official shall return to his field, garden, or house, and he shall appropriate the property given in exchange.

Responsibilities of land-tenants

§ 42. If a man has hired a field to cultivate and has caused no corn to grow on the field, he shall be held responsible for not doing the work on the field and shall pay an average rent.

Responsibilities of land-tenants

§ 43. If he has not cultivated the field and has left it alone, he shall give to the owner of the field an average rent, and the field which he has neglected he shall break up with mattocks and plough it, and shall return it to the owner of the field.

The rent of unbroken land

§ 44. If a man has taken a piece of virgin soil to open up, on a three years' lease, but has left it alone, has not opened up the land, in the fourth year he shall break it up, hoe it, and plough it, and shall return it to the owner of the field, and shall measure out ten *GUR* of corn for each *GAN* of land.

Loss of crop by storm apportioned between landlord and tenant

§ 45. If a man has let his field to a farmer and has received his rent for the field but afterward the field has been flooded by rain, or a storm has carried off the crop, the loss shall be the farmer’s.

Loss of crop by storm apportioned between landlord and tenant

§ 46. If he has not received the rent of his field, whether he let it for a half, or for a third, of the crop, the farmer and the owner of the field shall share the corn that is left in the field, according to their agreement.

Landlord cannot restrain a satisfactory tenant from subletting

§ 47. If a tenant farmer, because he did not start farming in the early part of the year, has sublet the field, the owner of the field shall not object; his field has been cultivated; at harvest-time he shall take rent, according to his agreement.

Abatement of debt on account of storm, flood, or drought

§ 48. If a man has incurred a debt and a storm has flooded his field or carried away the crop, or the corn has not grown because of drought, in that year he shall not pay his creditor. Further, he shall post-date his bond and shall not pay interest for that year.

Rights in a crop pledged for debt

§ 49. If a man has received money from a merchant and has given to the merchant a field, planted with corn, or sesame, and has said to him, “Cultivate the field and reap and take the corn, or sesame, that shall be grown”; if the bailiff has reared corn, or sesame, in the field, at harvest-time the owner of the field shall take what corn, or sesame, has been grown in the field and shall pay corn to the merchant for his money that he took of him and its interest, and for the maintenance of the bailiff.

Rights in a crop pledged for debt

§ 50. If the field he gave was [already] cultivated, or the sesame was grown up, the owner of the field shall take the corn, or sesame, that has been grown in the field, and shall return the money and its interest to the merchant.

Rights in a crop pledged for debt

§ 51. If he has not money enough, he shall give to the merchant sesame, or corn, according to its market price, for the money which he took from the merchant and its interest, according to the king’s standard.

Rights in a crop pledged for debt

§ 52. If the bailiff has not reared corn or sesame in the field the debtor's obligation shall not be lessened.

Riparian responsibilities

§§ 53, 54. If a man has neglected to strengthen his dike and has not kept his dike strong, and a breach has broken out in his dike, and the waters have flooded the meadow, the man in whose dike the breach has broken out shall restore the corn he has caused to be lost. [54]. If he be not able to restore the corn, he and his goods shall be sold, and the owners of the meadow whose corn the water has carried away shall share the money.

Penalty for neglect to shut off water

§ 55. If a man has opened his runnel for watering and has left it open, and the water has flooded his neighbor’s field, he shall pay him an average crop.

Penalty for neglect to shut off water

§ 56. If a man has let out the waters and they flood the young plants in his neighbor's field, he shall measure out ten *gur* of corn for each *gan* of land.

Damage done to growing crop by sheep

§ 57. If a shepherd has not agreed with the owner of the field to allow his sheep to eat off the green crop and without consent of the owner has let his sheep feed off it, the owner of the field shall harvest his crop, but the shepherd who without consent of the owner of the field caused his sheep to eat it shall give to the owner of the field, over and above his crop, twenty *gur* of corn for each *gan* of land.

Damage done to growing crop by sheep

§ 58. If, after the sheep have come up out of the meadows and have passed into the common fold at the city gate, a shepherd has placed his sheep in a field and caused his sheep to feed in the field, the shepherd shall keep the field he has grazed, and, at harvest-time, he shall measure out to the owner sixty *gur* of corn for each *gan* of land.

Cutting down a tree without permission Rent of a gardenplot

§ 59. If a man without the consent of the owner has cut down a tree in an orchard, he shall weigh out half a mina of silver.

Cutting down a tree without permission Rent of a gardenplot

§§ 60, 61. If a man has given a field to a gardener to plant a garden and the gardener has planted the garden, he shall train the garden four years; in the fifth year the owner of the garden and the gardener shall share the garden equally, the owner of the garden shall gather his share and take it. [61]. If the gardener, in planting the garden, has not planted all, but has left a bare patch, he shall reckon the bare patch in his share.

Cutting down a tree without permission Rent of a gardenplot

§ 62. If he has not planted the field which was given him as a garden; then, if it was arable land, the gardener shall measure out to the owner of the field an average rent for the years that were neglected, and shall perform the stipulated work on the field (*i.e.,* make it into a garden), and return it to the owner of the field.

Cutting down a tree without permission Rent of a gardenplot

§ 63. If the land was uncultivated, he shall do the stipulated work on the field, and return to the owner of the field and shall measure out for each year ten *gur* of corn for each *gan.*

Garden rented on shares

§ 64. If a man has given his garden to a gardener to farm, the gardener, as long as he holds the garden, shall give the owner of the garden two-thirds of the produce of the garden and shall take one-third himself.

Garden rented on shares

§ 65. If the gardener has not tilled the garden and has diminished the yield, the gardener shall pay an average rent.

Three of five erased columns

Here came the five erased columns, of which the three following sections are restored from copies in Ashurbânipal's library:

Obligations of owner to gather a date-crop assigned for debt

§ X. [If a man has borrowed money of a merchant and has given a date grove] to the merchant and has said to him, “Take the dates that are in my grove for your money”; that merchant shall not consent, the owner of the grove shall take the dates that are in the grove and shall answer to the merchant for the money and its interest, according to the tenor of his agreement, and the owner of the grove shall take the surplus of the dates that are in the grove.

Eviction of house-tenant

§ Y. [If a man has let a house] and the tenant has paid to the owner of the house the full rent for a term of years, and if the owner of the house has ordered the tenant to leave before his time is up, the owner of the house, because he has ordered his tenant to leave before his time is up, [shall repay a proportionate amount] from what the tenant has paid him.

Acceptance of goods in payment of debt, in default of money or corn

§ Z. [If a man has borrowed money of a merchant] and has not corn or money wherewith [to pay], but has goods; whatever is in his hands, he shall give to the merchant, before the elders. The merchant shall not object; he shall receive it.

Comments

This is not the place to write a commentary on the Code, but there are a few necessary cautions. One of the first is that most clauses are permissive rather than positive. The verb “shall” is not an imperative, but a future. Doubtless in case of heinous crimes the death-penalty had to be inflicted. But there was always a trial, and proof was demanded on oath. In many cases the “shall” is only permissive, as when the Code says a widow “shall” marry again. There is no proof that the jury decided only facts and found the prisoner guilty or not, leaving the judge no option but to inflict the extreme penalty. The judge, on the contrary, seems to have had much legislative power. When this view is taken, the Code appears no more severe than those of the Middle Ages, or even of recent times, when a man was hanged for sheep-stealing. There are many humanitarian clauses and much protection is given the weak and the helpless. One of the best proofs of its inherent excellence is that it helped to build up an empire, which lasted many centuries and was regarded with reverence almost to the end.

THE PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE TO THE CODE OF HAMMURABI

The prologue and epilogue of the Code are very difficult to translate. Often the phrases are simply stock expressions which occur in most of the royal inscriptions. The meanings of many of these have degenerated to mere titles of courtesy and their original significance is obscure. But early translators found no difficulty in guessing the most complimentary things to say, and more recent scholars in their efforts to be exact become grotesque. When an ancient king called himself a "rabid buffalo" it doubtless gave him satisfaction, but it would be very rude for us to do so. On the other hand, it is very tiresome to an English reader to read a sentence of three hundred lines in length before coming to a principal verb. Such a sentence, a string of epithets and participles, is here broken up into short clauses and the participles turned into finite verbs. This is done, not because the translator is entirely ignorant of grammar, but in pity for the reader. This further necessitates turning the third person singular, in which the king speaks of himself, like a modern acceptance of an invitation to dinner, into the more simple direct narration in the first person. Anyone who wishes to compare this translation with the original will please recall that this is done for ease in understanding, not because the original was misunderstood.

A more serious difficulty is, that, as it was customary to apply the same honorific titles to both a god and the king, it is often uncertain to which the original meant to apply them. This may have been left intentionally vague. Some translators have taken on themselves to settle to which they will refer the epithet, to the god or to the king. Such translations are only interesting as a record of private opinions. They settle nothing, do not even give a presumption in favor of anything. It is more honest to leave the translation as vague as the original, when this can be done. This part of the stele is full of rare words, or what is just as bad, words which invariably occur in the same context. If a king calls himself by some strange honorific title, it is no assistance to understanding the meaning of it that a score of successors should do the same. Of many words, all we can conjecture is that the king was honored by them. There is nothing to indicate what they really meant. In some cases "mighty" is as likely to be correct as "wise." There is no reason why we should prefer either rendering. Both can hardly be right,

neither may really be. Some king may once have prided himself on being an expert potter, as a modern monarch might on being a photographer. If he called himself on a monument a “superb potter,” all his successors would keep the title, though they never made a pot in their lives. We have only to peruse the titles of modern monarchs to be sure of the fact. It is, therefore, to be hoped that no one will build any far-reaching theories upon logical deductions from the translations given here or elsewhere of such honorific titles.

PROLOGUE TO THE CODE OF HAMMURABI

When the most high God (Anu), king of the spirits of heaven (Anunnaki), (and)Bêl, lord of heaven and earth, who settles the fates of all, allotted to Marduk, the first-born of Ea, the lord God of right, a rule over men and extolled him among the spirits of earth (Igigi), then they nominated for Babylon a name above all, they made it renowned in all quarters, and in the midst of it they founded an everlasting sovereignty, whose seat is established like heaven and earth; then did God (Anu) and Bêl call me by name, Hammurabi, the high prince, god-fearing, to exemplify justice in the land, to banish the proud and oppressor, that the great should not despoil the weak, to rise like the sun over the black-headed race (mankind) and illumine the land, to give health to all flesh. ammurabi the (good) shepherd, the choice of Bêl, am I, the completer of plenty and abundance, the fulfiller of every purpose. For Nippur, and Dûrili (epithet of Nippur or part of it?), I highly adorned ê-kur (the temple of Bêl there). In powerful sovereignty I restored Eridu and cleansed ê-zu-ab (temple of Ea there). By onslaughts on every side (the four quarters) I magnified the name of Babylon and rejoiced the heart of Marduk my lord. Every day I stood in ê-sag-gil (the temple of Marduk at Babylon). Descendant of kings whom Sin had begotten, I enriched the city of Ur, and humbly adoring, was a source of abundance to ê-ner-nu-gal (the temple of Sin at Ur). A king of knowledge, instructed by Shamash the judge, I strongly established Sippara, reclothed the rear of the shrine of Aya (the consort of Shamash), and planned out ê-bab-bar (temple of Shamash at Sippara) like a dwelling in heaven. In arms I avenged Larsa (held by the Elamite, Rim-Sin), and restored ê-bab-bar (temple of Shamash at Larsa) for Shamash my helper. As overlord I gave fresh life to Erech, furnishing abundance of water to its people, and completed the spire of ê-an-na (temple of Nanâ at Erech). I completed the glory of Anu and Ninni. As a protector of my land, I reassembled the scattered people of Nisin (recently reconquered from the Elamites) and replenished the treasury of ê-gal-ma (temple of Nisin). As the royal potentate of the city and own brother of its god Zamama, I enlarged the palace at Kish and surrounded with splendor ê-me-te-ur-sag (the temple at Kish). I made secure the great shrine of Ninni. I ordered the temple of arsagkalama ê-ki-sal-nakiri, by whose assistance I attained my desire. I restored Kutha and increased everything at

ê-sid-lam (the temple there). Like a charging bull, I bore down my enemies. Beloved of tu-tu (a name of Marduk) in my love for Borsippa, of high purpose untiring, I cared for ê-zi-da (temple of Nabû there). As a god, king of the city, knowing and farseeing, I looked to the plantations of Dilbat and constructed its granaries for ib (the god of Dilbat) the powerful, the lord of the insignia, the sceptre and crown, with which he invested me. As the beloved of ma-ma (consort of ib), I set fast the bas-reliefs at Kish and renewed the holy meals for Erishtu (goddess of Kish). With foresight and power I ordered the pasturages and watering-places for Sirpurla and Girsu and arranged the extensive offerings in ê-50 (the temple of "the fifty" at Sirpurla). I scattered my enemies. As the favorite of Telitim (a god), I fulfilled the oracles of allab and rejoiced the heart of gis-dar (its goddess). Grand prince, whose prayers Adad knows well, I soothed the heart of Adad, the warrior in Bît Karkara. I fastened the ornaments in ê-ud-gal-gal (temple there). As a king who gave life to Adab, I repaired ê-ma (temple at Adab). As hero and king of the city, unrivalled combatant, I gave life to Mashkan-Shabri and poured forth abundance on sit-lam (temple of Nêrgal there). The wise, the restorer, who had conquered the whole of the rebellious, I rescued the people of Malkâ in trouble. I strengthened their abodes with every comfort. For Ea and dam-gal-nun-na I increased their rule and in perpetuity appointed the lustrous offerings. As a leader and king of the city, I made the settlements on the Euphrates to be populous. As client of Dagan, who begat me, I avenged the people of Mera and Tutul. As high prince, I made the face of Ninni to shine, making the lustrous meals of nin-a-zu secure. I reunited my people in famine by assuring their allowances within Babylon in peace and security. As the shepherd of my people, a servant whose deeds were acceptable to gis-dar in e-ul-mash (temple of Anunit) in the midst of Agade, noted for its wide squares, I settled the rules and set straight the Tigris. I brought back to Asshur the gracious colossus and settled the altar (?). As king of Nineveh I made the waters of Ninni to shine in ê-dup-dup. High of purpose and wise in achievement for the great gods, descendant of Sumu-lâil, eldest son of Sin-muballi?, long descended scion of royalty, great king, a very Shamash (or sun) of Babylon, I caused light to arise upon Sumer and Akkad. A king who commanded obedience in all the four quarters, beloved of Ninni am I. When Marduk brought me to direct all people and commissioned me to give judgment, I laid down justice and right in the provinces, I made all flesh to prosper. Then—(*the words of the Code are the*

completion of the sentence. The king implies that its regulations were the outcome of this legislative decision).

THE EPILOGUE

The judgments of righteousness which Hammurabi, the powerful king, settled, and caused the land to receive a sure polity and a gracious rule.

I am Hammurabi, the superb king. Marduk gave me to shepherd the black-headed race, whom Bêl had assigned me. I did not forget, I did not neglect, I found for them safe pastures, I opened the way through sharp rocks, and gave them guidance. With the powerful weapon that Zamama and Ishtar granted me, by the foresight with which Ea endowed me, with the power that Marduk gave me, I cut off the enemy above and below, I lorded it over the conquered. The flesh of the land I made to rejoice. I extended the dwellings of the people in security. I left them no cause to fear. The great gods chose me and I am the shepherd that gives peace, whose club is straight; of evil and good in my city I was the director. I carried all the people of Sumer and Akkad in my bosom. By my protection, I guided in peace its brothers. By my wisdom, I provided for them. That the great should not oppress the weak, to counsel the widow and orphan, in Babylon, the city of Anu and Bêl, I raised up its head (the stele's) in ê-sag-gil (temple of Marduk there), the temple whose foundation is firm as the heaven and earth. To judge the judgment of the land, to decide the decisions of the land, to succor the injured, I wrote on my stele the precious words and placed them before my likeness, that of a righteous king. The king that is gentle, king of the city, exalted am I. My words are precious, my power has no rival. By the order of Shamash, the judge supreme, of heaven and earth, that judgment may shine in the land; by the permission of Marduk, my lord, I set up a bas-relief, to preserve my likeness in ê-sag-gil that I love, to commemorate my name forever in gratitude. The oppressed who has a suit to prosecute may come before my image, that of a righteous king, and read my inscription and understand my precious words and may my stele elucidate his case. Let him see the law he seeks and may he draw in his breath and say: "This Hammurabi was a ruler who was to his people like the father that begot them. He obeyed the order of Marduk his lord, he followed the commands of Marduk above and below. He delighted the heart of Marduk his lord, and granted happy life to his people forever. He guided the land." Let him recite the document. Before Marduk, my lord, and ? arpanitum, my lady, with full heart let him draw near. The colossus and the

gods that live in ê-sag-gil, or the courts of ê-sag-gil, let him bless every day before Marduk, my lord, and ?arpanitum, my lady.

In the future, in days to come, at any time, let the king who is in the land, guard the words of righteousness which I have written on my stele. Let him not alter the judgment of the land which I judged nor the decisions I decided. Let him not destroy my basrelief. If that man has wisdom and is capable of directing his land, let him attend to the words which I have written upon my stele, let him apprehend the path, the rule, the law of the land which I judged, and the decision I decided for the land, and so let him guide forward the black-headed race; let him judge their judgment and decide their decision, let him cut off from his land the proud and violent, let him rejoice the flesh of his people. Hammurabi, the king of righteousness, to whom Shamash has granted rights, am I. My words are precious, my deeds have no rival. Above and below I am the whirlwind that scours the deep and the height. If that man has hearkened to my words which I have written on my stele and has not frustrated justice, has not altered my words, has not injured my bas-reliefs, may Shamash make lasting his sceptre; like me, as a king of righteousness, let him guide his people in justice.

But if that man does not hearken to my words which I wrote on my stele, forgets my curses, fears not the malediction of God, sets aside the judgment which I judged, alters my words and destroys my bas-reliefs, effaces my inscribed name and writes in his own name; or, for fear of these curses has charged another to do so; that man, be he king, lord, patêsi, or noble, whose name is ever so renowned, may the great god (Anu), the father of gods, who named my reign, turn him back, shatter his sceptre in pieces, curse his fortunes; may Bêl the lord who fixes the fates, whose command is not set aside, who extended my sovereignty, cause for him an endless revolt, an impulse to fly from his home, and set for his fortune a reign of sighs, short days, years of want, darkness that has no ray of light and a death in the sight of all men. May he decree with his heavy curse the ruin of his city, the scattering of his people, the removal of his sovereignty, the disappearance of his name and his race from the land. May Beltu, the great mother, whose command is weighty in ê-kur, the lady who made my plans prosperous, make his words in the matter of justice and law to be hateful before Bêl. May she bring about the downfall of his country, the loss of his people, the efflux of his life like water, by the order of the Bêl, the king. May Ea, the grand prince, whose destiny takes premier rank, the messenger of the gods,

who knows all, who has prolonged my life, distort his understanding and intellect, curse him with forgetfulness, dam up his rivers at their source. In his land may Ashnan (the deity of wheat), the life of the people, not grow. May Shamash, great judge of heaven and earth, who governs the creatures of life, the lord of help, cut off his sovereignty; judge not his judgment; carry away his path; annihilate the march of his armies; cast an evil look upon him to uproot his rule, and fix for him the loss of his land. May the evil sentence of Shamash quickly overwhelm him; deprive him of life among the living above; and below in the earth, deprive his ghost of water. May Sin, the lord of the sky, the god who creates, whose ray is splendid among the gods, deprive him of crown and throne of kinship; surround him with a great shirt of pain, a heavy penalty, that will not leave his body, and make him finish his days, month by month, through the years of his reign, in tears and sighs. May he multiply for him the burden of royalty. May he grant him as his lot a life that can only be likened to death. May Adad, lord of abundance, great bull of the sky, and the earth, my helper, withdraw the rain from the heavens, the floods from the springs; destroy his land with hunger and want; thunder in wrath over his city, and turn his land to deluge mounds. May Zamama, great warrior, first born of ê-kur, who goes at my right hand on the battlefield, shatter his weapon and turn for him day into night. May he place his enemy over him. May Ishtar, the lady of conflict and battle, who prospered my arms, my gracious protector, who loved my reign, in her heart of rage, her boundless fury, curse his sovereignty; turn all his mercies to curses, shatter his weapon in conflict and battle, appoint him trouble and sedition, strike down his heroes, and make the earth drink of their blood, scatter the plain with heaps of the carcasses of his troops, grant them no burial; deliver himself into the hands of his enemy, cause him to be carried in chains to the enemy's land. May Nêrgal, the powerful one of the gods, who meets with no rival, who caused me to obtain my triumphs, burn up his people with a fever like a great fire among the reeds. With his powerful weapon may he drink him up, with his fevers crush him like a statue of clay. May Erishtu, the exalted lady of all lands, the creator-mother, carry off his son and leave him no name. May he not beget a seed of posterity among his people. May Nin-karrak, the daughter of Anu, the completer of my mercies in ê-kur, award him a severe malady, a grievous illness, a painful wound, which cannot be healed, of which the physician knows not the origin, which cannot be soothed by the bandage; and rack

him with palsy, until she has mastered his life; may she weaken his strength. May the great gods of heaven and earth, the Anunnaki, in their assembly, who look after the halls and the courts of this Ê-bar-ra (temple of Shamash at Sippara, where the stele was clearly set up), curse with a bitter curse his dynasty, his land, his soldiers, his people, and his subjects. May the judgments of Bêl, which in his mouth are irrevocable, curse him and quickly overcome him.

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